

What if Alice was a Refugee in Wonderland?

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This course reviews the Great Tradition of Western literature imagining that central characters faced challenges that are similar to those confronted by refugees in the contemporary world. I will discuss everything from the *Bible* to *Alice in Wonderland*, from Greek tragedies to Los Vegas representations of them, from Dickens' *Christmas Carol* to *The Grapes of Wrath*. Did Scrooge suffer similar anxieties to those experienced by Latin American migrants who trust their fate to *coyotes*? Do those who try to help people escape war-torn countries face challenges that resemble those facing Moses as he tries to imagine convincing the people of Israel to flee Egypt? The answers and concordances are surprising!

October 9: An overview of foundational international migration documents, and the practical tools needed to identify and interpret state obligations related to forced migration. The literary text this week is "Death and the Maiden", an excellent text/play/film that can help us to consider what an artistic rendering of this realm can accomplish. During this course, we'll come back to it as a touchstone for our work.

Readings

Geneva Convention (1951), Handbook, and Protocol (1967). It's very useful to examine the history of how these documents came into being, a history that is available at <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/1951-refugee-convention.html>.

Polanski's film (and/or Dorfman's play): "Death and the Maiden", available at [http://vanderbilt.edu/oli/class-materials/Death and the Maiden script.pdf](http://vanderbilt.edu/oli/class-materials/Death%20and%20the%20Maiden%20script.pdf).

October 16: Basic Concepts of Forced Migration: Lewis Carroll, Exodus and the Bible: We will overview basic concepts of regular and forced migration, including the causes of flight, and the way that these were discussed (1965-7) during the process of amending the 1951 Convention. We'll also discuss some famous literary texts that become fascinating examples when viewed as stories that have something to contribute to the understanding of this realm, notably *Alice in Wonderland* and *Exodus*.

Readings

The 1967 Protocol to the Convention: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/1951-refugee-convention.html>.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11/11-h/11-h.htm>

Bible, *Exodus*: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0203.htm>

October 23: What about Franz Kafka? The most often-cited author when we think about possible overlaps between literature and law is Franz Kafka, but nothing has been written about the ways in which he anticipates, and refugees, the plight of vulnerable migrants. We'll do so, in regards some of his most famous texts.

Readings

Franz Kafka, The Trial, translated by David Wyllie.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7849/pg7849-images.html>; "The Great Wall of China,"

<http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/kafka/greatwallofchinahtml.html>

October 30: Theories of Migration meet John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Theories of migration: moving beyond the pull and push factors. International relations and migration, the movement of labor forces, cultural encounters, and the multicultural, melting pot and communities of migrants that are the inevitable result.

Readings

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/search?query=paradise+lost>

November 6: Refugees at Sea: The rise of the UNHCR and the OIM: Who is a refugee? Who isn't? On what grounds? Refugee definitions, different standards of recognition, International and national forms of protection. Possible arguments derived from ethics and philosophy in favour of protecting refugees.

Readings

H.G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/159/159-h/159-h.htm>

November 13: Outsiderness in Law and Literature: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: Analysis of the 1951 Convention especially the refugee definition regarding persecution: acts, actors. Is persecution universal or culturally bound? And finally, what can we learn about a society by examining its laws regarding censorship, that is, controlling behaviors, texts and other artifacts deemed dangerous, polluting or 'filthy'?

Readings

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*. <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/shelley/mary/s53f/>

Emile Zola:

<https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1644&context=facpub>;

National Vigilance Association's *Pernicious Literature*

[http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=National%20Vigilance%20Association%20\(Great%20Britain\)](http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=National%20Vigilance%20Association%20(Great%20Britain)).